

Calendar of Events

February 9-June 3, 2007—100 Years at the Williams House, Museum of American Heritage, 351 Homer Avenue. For more information call (650) 321-1004 or check their Website at www.moah.org.

Sunday, March 4, 2 p.m.—Seen Any Good Movies Lately? View historical films of Palo Alto including the opening of the University Avenue underpass in 1941. Palo Alto Historical Association. Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield.

Sunday, April 1, 2 p.m.—Palo Alto Historical Association. Lucie Stern Community Center.

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HELP WANTED: Webmaster

PAST is looking for someone to take over the management of our Website. We need someone familiar with basic HTML and CSS. The current webmaster will be available for consultation.

If interested, please contact PAST President, Ralph Britton.

ralphbritton@sbc.net

telephone: (650) 328-0760



PAST News

Palo Alto Stanford Heritage
P.O. Box 308
Palo Alto, CA 94302

PAST Heritage is a nonprofit organization advocating the preservation of the historic architecture, neighborhoods, and character of the greater Palo Alto Stanford area through informed citizen involvement and education.

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Gail Woolley



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Winter 2007

Williams House Turns 100 and You Are Invited



The Museum of American Heritage is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Williams House. This historic house was built for Dr. Thomas Williams, his wife, and two young daughters, and was designed by noted architect Ernest Coxhead. Dr. Williams was a prominent Palo Alto physician. His practice, which began in this house, was the very beginning of what would become the Palo Alto Medical Clinic. The Williams family were active in the Palo Alto and Stanford communities. Among their friends were President Herbert Hoover and Stanford President Ray Lyman Wilbur. Dr. Williams died in 1947, and his wife, Dora, shown at right in her wedding dress, died the following year. Their daughters, Rhona and Betty, lived the remainder of their lives in the house; Rhona died in 1989. She left the house to the City of Palo Alto with the stipulation that it be made available to the public for cultural purposes. The Museum of American Heritage (MOAH) was selected by the City in 1994 to become the occupant of the house. After the Museum raised enough funds to renovate and

restore the property, the Museum's doors at the Williams House opened in April 1998.

In a new exhibit, the museum will feature family life at the Williams house as it was when Dr. Williams and his family moved into the house on Homer Avenue in 1907. The exhibit is entitled "100 Years at the Williams House: The Early Years," and will include highlights of the family's life from 1907 to 1932. It will give a glimpse of what life was like in the early part of the 20th century. Home entertainment, music, books, travel memorabilia, and domestic life will all be on display.

You can also visit Dr. Williams' home office and laboratory.

The exhibit opens on February 9 and runs through June 3, and is open to the public. Exhibit hours and operations are Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

In addition to the regular exhibit hours, every Saturday afternoon at 2 p.m. for the duration of the exhibit, a PAST docent will give a guided architectural tour of the house.

The Museum of American Heritage at the Williams House is located at 351 Homer Avenue in Palo Alto, between Waverley and Bryant streets.☞

For more information go to the MOAH website: www.moah.org.



President's Column

At the point where Kingsley Avenue terminates into Emerson Street, there is a tiny park. If you visit this place you will find a stone monument with a bronze plaque denoting "Professorville." It was placed there in 1969 by the City of Palo Alto in cooperation with the Palo Alto Historical Association, on the occasion of the city's 75th birthday and reads: *"These early homes survived the great earthquake of 1906, and today constitute the largest remaining neighborhood of its kind in the mid-peninsula area."*

More recently, there has been some discussion about perhaps having street signs in the area carry the message *"Professorville, a National Register of Historic Places Historic District."* The exact wording would of course need to be compatible with the signage, etc., but you get the idea. The intention is that by so identifying the district, homeowners in the area could feel a sense of responsibility as curators of an important historic resource. The Ramona Street Architectural District could also be identified with additional signage, in addition to the plaque on the Pedro de Lemos building at 535 Ramona Street.

There are other districts in the town of some historic importance, and perhaps they too could be so distinguished. My street in Old Palo Alto has a range of simpler homes, well built by qualified craftsmen of the time, but owned by trades people and others of modest means. But some of these people contributed their bit to the history of the town. There was the machinist making engines for Liberty Ships at Hendy's Ironworks, a photographer, and a smattering of teachers, lawyers, and stockbrokers (which weren't high-paying jobs in the depression!). There were members of the City Council and "block mothers" who offered safe haven to youngsters coming home from school if the air-raid siren were to go off. And, yes, there was the home proudly displaying a Gold Star in the window—silent tribute to the son who would not be coming home. There is much to remember, and these houses are a visible link to earlier times.

Publicly identifying our historic districts might be a way to instill pride in what exists, and encourage the thoughtful remodeling and preservation of many fine homes, so that they might remain to be appreciated by future Palo Altans.☞

Ralph Britton, President

"...identifying the district, homeowners in the area could feel a sense of responsibility as curators of an important historic resource."

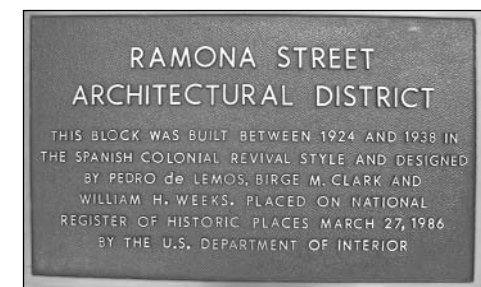
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Many Thanks to All Our New and Renewing Members

PAST Heritage is funded solely by contributions from its members. Because of your support, we are pleased to begin 2007 with a strong membership base and look forward to a year of expanding our education and preservation efforts.

In fact, because a healthy membership brings new perspective and enthusiasm, we'd like to hear more from you. What are your thoughts? Are there ways you feel we could expand our impact? Are there essential preservation tools/incentives you think our community is missing? In upcoming newsletters look for opportunities to tell us what's important to you! ☞

Dianne MacDaniels Membership Chair

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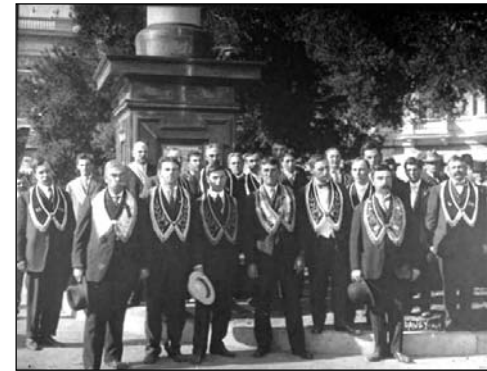
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Palo Alto's Flagpole

In the past, every town had a flagpole in its town square. Palo Alto was no exception, only our town square was "The Circle" where University Avenue, Alma Street and the railroad tracks intersected. The first known flagpole on The Circle was probably a locally-harvested eucalyptus pole erected in the early 1890's.



Native Sons of the Golden West with flagpole on The Circle.

By 1908 the pole was no longer structurally sound enough to permit someone to climb and restring the flag's halyard which had been vandalized by several local boys. A local committee was created to replace the old flagpole. A local resident and timber merchant contributed two Douglas Fir logs from his mill in Washington. They were brought to San Francisco, and then floated down the bay to Redwood City where horse drawn wagons hauled them to Palo Alto. Woodworkers skilled in mast-building shaped them so that they could be spliced to form one very tall pole—more than 200 feet tall. Townspeople claimed that Palo Alto's new flagpole was the tallest such pole in the western United States.

The flagpole performed its civic duty until 1941 when the plans for the new University Avenue underpass eliminated The Circle as a local meeting place. It was decided to move the flagpole and its base to its current location outside Macarthur Park restaurant, which in 1941 was a building in transition from the City's Community House to a clubhouse for veterans.



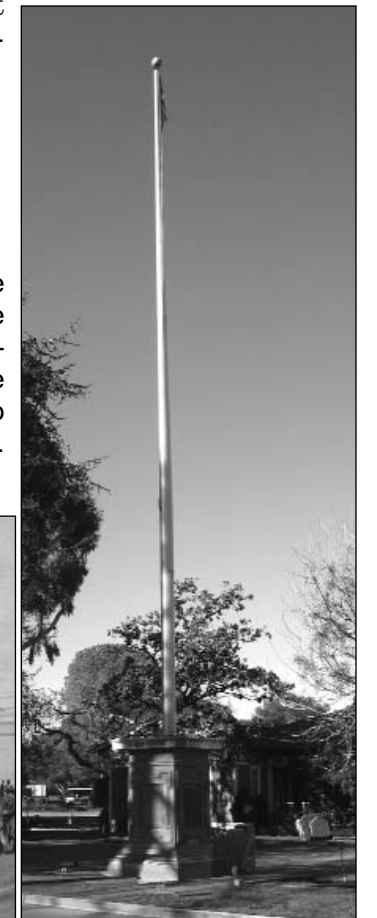
Flagpole after 1941.

By 1955, years of exposure and poor maintenance resulted in rot, damaging the upper portions of the flagpole. City staff, including members of the Fire Department and Utility Department, removed the upper half and replaced the damaged wooden pole with a steel pole and new ball. It was discovered that the new pole was only 120 feet tall. Accounting for the footage removed, the pole was missing some 40 feet. It is not known if the missing feet were removed at some earlier date, or if its proclaimed original height was a "tall take".

In 2006, veterans groups approached the City and several service clubs with the idea of funding some improvements to the flagpole, including a new flag, an improved halyard system, and better lighting. The Lions and Kiwanis clubs contributed funds and one of their members asked if the Palo Alto Historical Association would contribute as well. PAHA agreed to contribute, and informally challenged PAST Heritage to match its contribution. Our board voted to donate up to \$500 to preserve and highlight one of Palo Alto's historic treasures. ☞

Steve Staiger

Editor's Note: A film of the parade on the opening of the underpass and other historical films will be shown at the March 4 meeting of the Palo Alto Historical Association. See Calendar for details.



Flagpole today.



A lovely afternoon was had by all.

I think that best describes PAST's 2006 Holiday House Tour. The variety of homes from cottages to handsome residences, from warm and inviting to exciting and modern resulted in everyone finding a favorite. The homemade cookies were a special treat and I hope that the program booklet will be a keeper for many.

The attendance was a record—694—as were ticket presales which brought in \$5639. Another \$1346 was realized on the day of the tour.

All this is the result of the generosity of six homeowners and the effort of over 70 volunteers. Some started working last February and many went the extra mile. For me as chair, this project was truly a delightful experience. ☼
Gail Woolley



FOUND at the HHT

- Earring
- Sunglasses
- Umbrella

To claim, call Gail Woolley, 327-4977.